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ABSTRACT

Student involvement in the democratic process and understanding of the nature of public schools can be enhanced through the study of community school board elections. The materials in this instructional guide present basic information with related student learning activities to assist teachers in planning an election mini-unit. The unit may be handled as current affairs or related to social studies topics. Basic information and student activities cover the following topics: (1) "What is a community school district?" (2) "How does the community school board affect us?" (3) "Who can vote?" (4) "How does a voter register?" (5) "How does one become a candidate?" (6) "Where do people vote?" (7) "How does a person vote?" and (8) "How are votes counted in proportional representation?" Culminating activities include making posters, organizing a school essay contest, preparing bulletin boards and school booklets, and writing letters to newspapers. Outline maps of the New York School City Board districts by borough are attached. (SM)

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COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

A SOCIAL STUDIES PLANNING GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Student interest and involvement in the democratic process can be furthered by the study of the Community School Board Elections to be held on May 6, 1980. Through using this election as a concrete illustration of political process, students can explore the concept of the public nature of public schools. Young people can also learn how their representatives serving on the Community School Boards help to govern the school system and can investigate the procedure by which these representatives are elected.

The materials in this instruction guide present basic information with related student learning activities to assist teachers in planning a mini-unit on the election. The unit may be handled as current affairs or related to social studies topics. The activities are geared for a wide range of grades; the way students carry out the activities will vary. Some suggestions are for grades five through high school and others may also be used in the early grades.

It is our hope that learning about the Community School Board Election process will aid in developing the basic interests and attitudes necessary for informed, responsible and active citizenship.

Frank J. Macchiarola,
Chancellor

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT?

Basic Information

The public school system is divided into 32 Community School Districts, each of which governs its elementary, intermediate, and junior high schools. Each Community School District is run by an elected, nine-member school board, which selects the Community Superintendent for the district.

Members serve without pay for a term of three years.

Related Student Activities

Find the approximate location of your school, other schools and the Community School District Office. Describe the locations in terms of compass directions, e.g., northeast part of the District; southwest part of the borough.*

Discuss why people are willing to serve without pay: Should they serve without pay? Is three years a suitable term?

Discuss how the Community Superintendent is selected.

HOW DOES THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD AFFECT US?

Basic Information

The decisions of a Community School Board affect the schools in many ways.

Some of the duties and powers of the Community School Board are appointment of principals; granting tenure and discharging employees after due process; deciding matters relating to instruction and certain repairs to school buildings; making policy concerning after-school, evening and summer programs. Community School Boards advise the Central Board of Education in collective bargaining with teacher and other unions, and propose capital and expense budgets.

There is continual and close consultation between the Central Board of Education and the Community School Boards through regular meetings of the Consultative Council.

The Community School Boards must consult with parent and parent-teacher associations in certain matters.

Related Student Activities

Find out the population of your school. Estimate how many students are in the district. (The numbers of schools in each district are listed on the attached maps.)

Discuss concepts of democracy related to the election:

Is voting a privilege, a right, a responsibility?

How much control should parents have over education? Why?

Write an agenda of items for inclusion in a Community School Board meeting. Conduct a simulated meeting.

Attend a local Community School Board meeting that is open to the public. Listen to the proceedings and report back to the class.

Invite parents to school to discuss their involvement with Community School District affairs and their views on the quality of their children's education.

*Outline maps of the Districts by borough are attached. For detailed maps of the District, see New York Public School Atlas. New York City Board of Education, Metropolitan Educational Laboratory, 1979.

WHO CAN VOTE?

Basic Information

Any person who is 18 years of age, a city resident for at least 30 days before the date of the Elections, and a registered voter qualified under the Elections Law to vote in all elections conducted by the City Board of Elections or who is a registered "parent voter."

There are two types of persons who can be "parent voters."

One is a person who is not a citizen and therefore not qualified to vote under the Elections Law but who has a child or children in a public elementary, intermediate or junior high school.

The other is a qualified voter who has a child or children in a public elementary, intermediate or junior high school in a district other than that in which he or she resides and in which he or she wishes to vote.

No person may vote more than once. No person may vote in more than one district.

Related Student Activities

Discuss the issues:

Why don't more parents and others vote in regular elections?

Why don't more parents and others vote in the Community School Board Elections?

Design a logo (symbol) and slogan that express the main idea of citizen control of public education.

HOW DOES A VOTER REGISTER?

Basic Information

First, it should be noted that persons already permanently registered for general elections who wish to vote in the Community School District in which they reside do not need to re-register.

Moreover, if a person registered for the 1977 CSB Elections as a "parent voter" and still has the same child in the same school as in the 1976-77 school year, that parent does not need to re-register. If there is doubt about a "parent voter" status, a parent should re-register.

Related Student Activities

Make posters giving registration information.

Form a committee in your high school to encourage registration by eighteen-year-old students.

Discuss the reasons why a person must register in order to be a voter?

HOW DOES A VOTER REGISTER? (cont.)

Basic Information

Both permanent voters and "parent voters" can register by mail. Forms are available at any of the borough offices of the Board of Elections. Many parent associations and other community groups are distributing these forms. In many elementary, intermediate and junior high schools, "parent voter" registration by volunteers from parent associations has been taking place.

In addition, borough offices of the Board of Elections are registering both permanently registered and "parent voters" daily -- Monday through Friday -- from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The last day on which borough offices will register "parent voters" will be March 3, 1980.

Further information about the Elections can be obtained by calling either the borough office or the central office of the Board of Elections, or the Division of Public Affairs at the Board of Education.

Related Student Activities

Have students ask parents if they have any questions about the voting process. In small groups have students exchange parents' questions and write answers. For any questions for which the answer is unclear, assign students to call the appropriate number or write a class letter asking for the information.

Board of Elections Offices		Telephone Numbers
Manhattan (Central)	131 Varick St.	924-1860
Bronx	1780 Grand Concourse	299-9017
Brooklyn	345 Adams St.	522-2441
Queens	77-40 Vleigh Pl. Flushing	380-2600
Staten Island	25 Hyatt St.	727-4300

Board of Education Office		
Division of Public Affairs	110 Livingston St.	596-8031

HOW DOES ONE BECOME A CANDIDATE?

Basic Information

Any person eligible to vote in the Community School Board Elections may be a candidate. A person may run for office in any Community School District in which he/she is eligible to vote.

Employees of a Community School District may not serve as Community School Board members for that district.

Candidates get on the ballot by filing a nominating petition containing at least 200 valid signatures of voters who will be registered either as "parent voters" or permanently registered voters.

Related Student Activities

In a small group, propose three situations in which district employees would have a conflict of interest if they were members of that District's School Board. (Examples of employees are teachers, principals, custodians, etc.) Write or report your ideas to the class.

Discuss other ways candidates for public office could be nominated. Is the petition method fair or unfair? Is 200 a suitable number of signatures?

Discuss what qualities a candidate should have. Prepare your own list of the five most important qualities for a candidate. Tabulate the results of all lists to determine the qualities most valued by the class.

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of affiliation with a slate; also of being an unaffiliated candidate.

WHERE DOES ONE VOTE?

Basic Information

Permanently registered voters will vote at their regular polling places in the Community School Districts in which they reside.

"Parent voters," as defined earlier, will vote at polling places assigned by the Board of Elections. The Board of Elections will notify the "parent voters" where their polling places will be.

Polls will be open between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.

Related Student Activities

Discuss why the polling places open early in the morning and late at night? What changes in voting dates and hours would you recommend, if any, to increase voter turn-out?

Discuss the reasons why schools often serve as regular polling places.

HOW DOES ONE VOTE?

Basic Information

Community School Board members are elected by proportional representation.

When a person arrives at the polling place, he/she will be given a paper ballot. On this paper ballot, the names of the candidates will be listed alphabetically. There will be no party or group identification. So that no candidate will have the advantage of a particular place on all of the ballots, the alphabetical order of these names will be rotated from polling place to polling place.

The voter will take this ballot to a curtained booth. It is in the privacy of this booth that the voter will mark his/her order of preference for the candidates listed.

Voters should study the ballot carefully and look for the name of the person whom they would most like to elect to the Community School Board, putting number "1" in the box next to this name and the number "2" beside the name of the person they think is next best . . . and "3," and "4" and so on.

The voter may rate all the candidates or as many as he/she wants.

Then the ballot should be folded to keep the vote secret. The voter then steps out of the booth and deposits the ballot in the ballot box.

Related Student Activities

With your teacher visit the polling place on the day of the Elections if it is in your school. Write a paragraph giving reactions: Was it as you expected?

HOW ARE VOTES COUNTED IN PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION?

Basic Information

This method is intended to give representation to groups who are in the minority among a district's voters as well as to those who are in the majority. Representation is proportional to voting strength.

The minimum number of votes needed by a candidate in order to be elected is called the "quota." This is determined by a formula which assures that we do not elect more candidates than there are places to be filled.

$$\text{Number of seats} + 1 \;\overline{)\text{Total number of valid ballots}}\;\; \text{Answer} + 1 = \text{Quota}$$

All candidates who have a quota or more of first choice votes are declared elected.

If a candidate has more than a quota (of first choice votes), surplus ballots are transferred to the next choice marked on each of them for a candidate not yet elected.

Related Student Activities

-As an exercise in proportional representation, hold a simulated School Board Election for four members of a class (do not use names of real candidates). Assure that approximately seven candidates are running for the four places by requiring a nominating petition with four signatures for each candidate. A student may not sign more than one petition.

The formula for proportional representation for a typical class could be:

$$\text{Number of seats plus 1}\;\; 4 + 1 = 5 \;\overline{)35}\;\; \begin{matrix}\text{Answer} + 1 = \text{Quota} \\ 7 + 1 = 8 \\ \text{Total number of valid ballots}\end{matrix}$$

Since the quota is eight, a candidate who has eight first-choice votes is automatically elected.

A ballot with a first-choice vote for a candidate who has already been elected is counted for the second-choice candidate marked on that ballot. If the second-choice candidate has already been elected, the ballot is counted as a vote for the third-choice candidate, and so on, until four candidates have each received eight votes.

-Debate the advantages and disadvantages of the proportional representation method of election.

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CULMINATING ACTIVITIES*

Make posters, collages, photo displays, and constructions that advertise the need for a larger voter turnout than in previous School Board Elections: polling place, date, registration details.

Make posters with vital information about the 1980 School Board Elections: polling place, date, registration details.

With your teacher, organize a class or school essay contest on topics that link the election to topics in the social studies curriculum.

Put up a bulletin board display of newspaper articles related to the 1980 Community School Board Elections.

Prepare a class or school booklet for parents about the election process.

Write letters to newspapers and radio and television stations expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction with coverage of the Community School Board Elections.

Write articles for the school newspaper on the outcome of the election.

*Schools may wish to inform the Division of Public Affairs about any outstanding student activities. Call 596-8031.

RELATED SOCIAL STUDIES TOPICS

The Community School Board Elections are an important topic for current affairs in all grades. In addition the School Board Elections may be explored as an illustration of democratic political process related to broader topics as follows:

Grade 1: Government Supplies Services to Meet People's Needs

Grade 4: How Leaders Helped Found Our Government; People Who Have Led in the Fight for Freedom

Grade 6: How Government Developed to Meet the Needs of the Individual and of Society

Grade 7: How American Democracy Changed in Response to the Needs of the 20th Century

Grade 8: How New York City Government Deals with Problems Created by Growth; Political Process and Political Parties

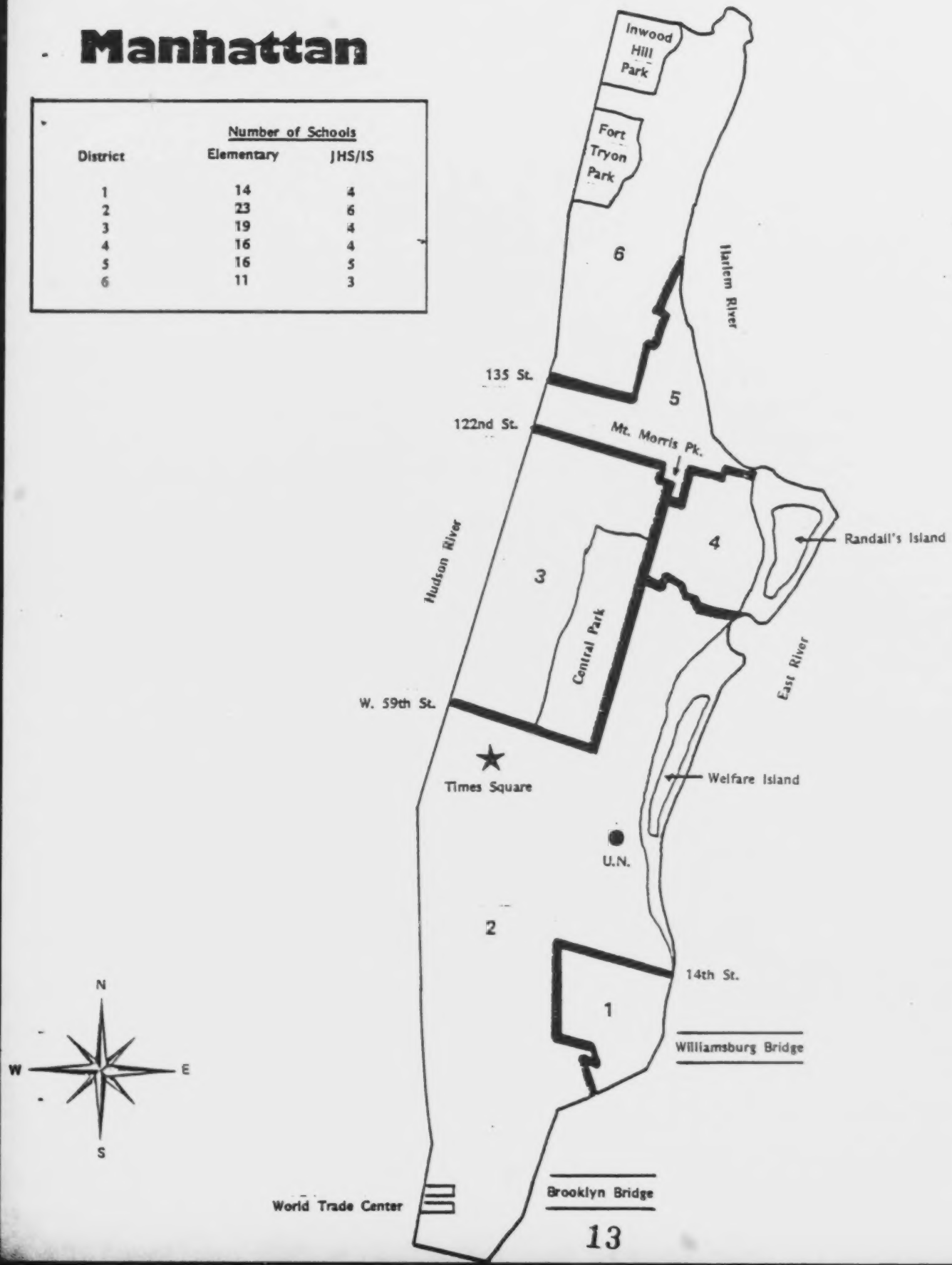
Grade 10: The Growth of Democracy (Western Civilization)

Grade 11: How Do We Govern Ourselves? (United States)

Grade 12: Economics: What Economic Problems Have Developed in New York City? (Impact on public education)

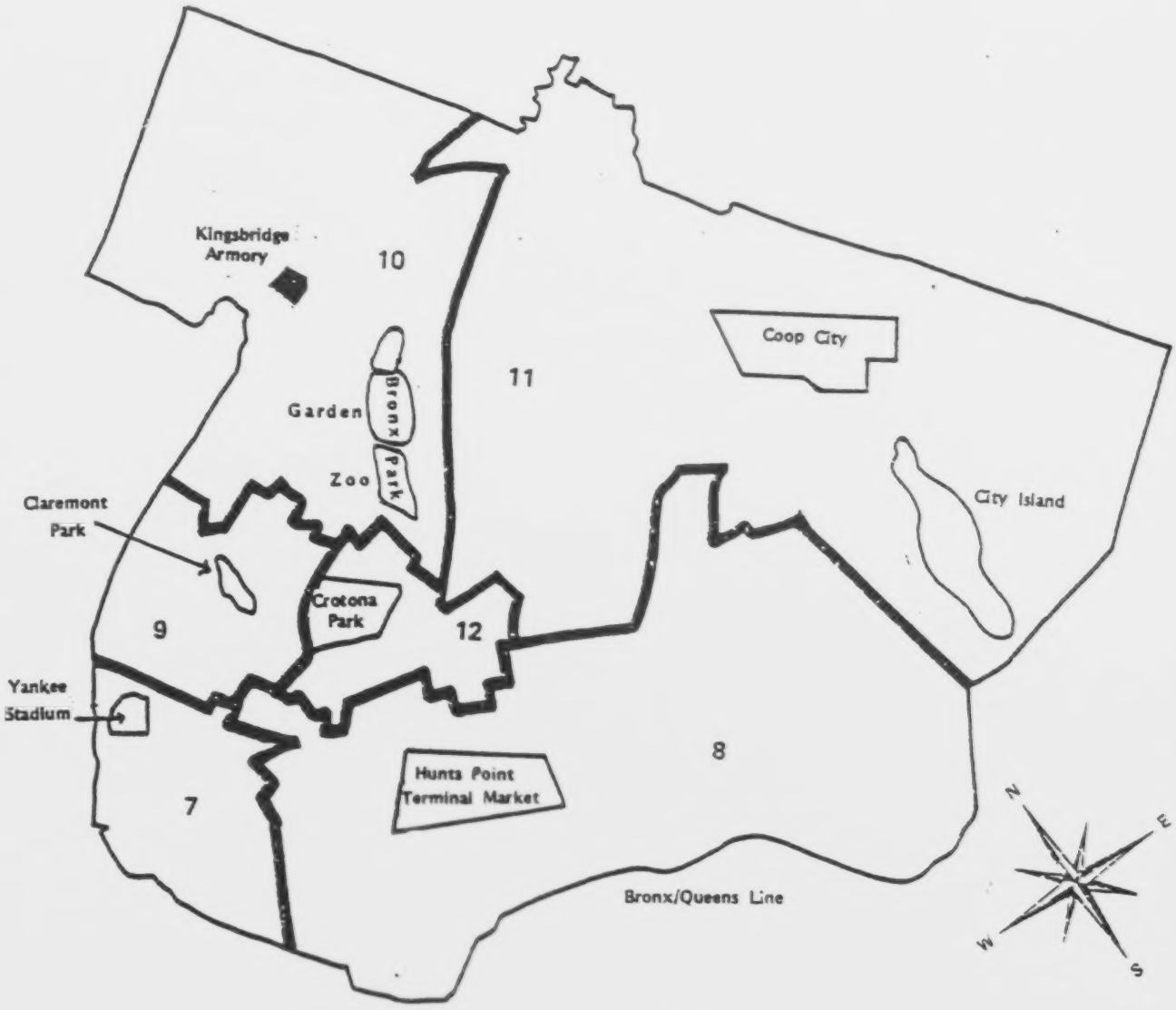
Manhattan

District	Number of Schools	
	Elementary	JHS/IS
1	14	4
2	23	6
3	19	4
4	16	4
5	16	5
6	11	3



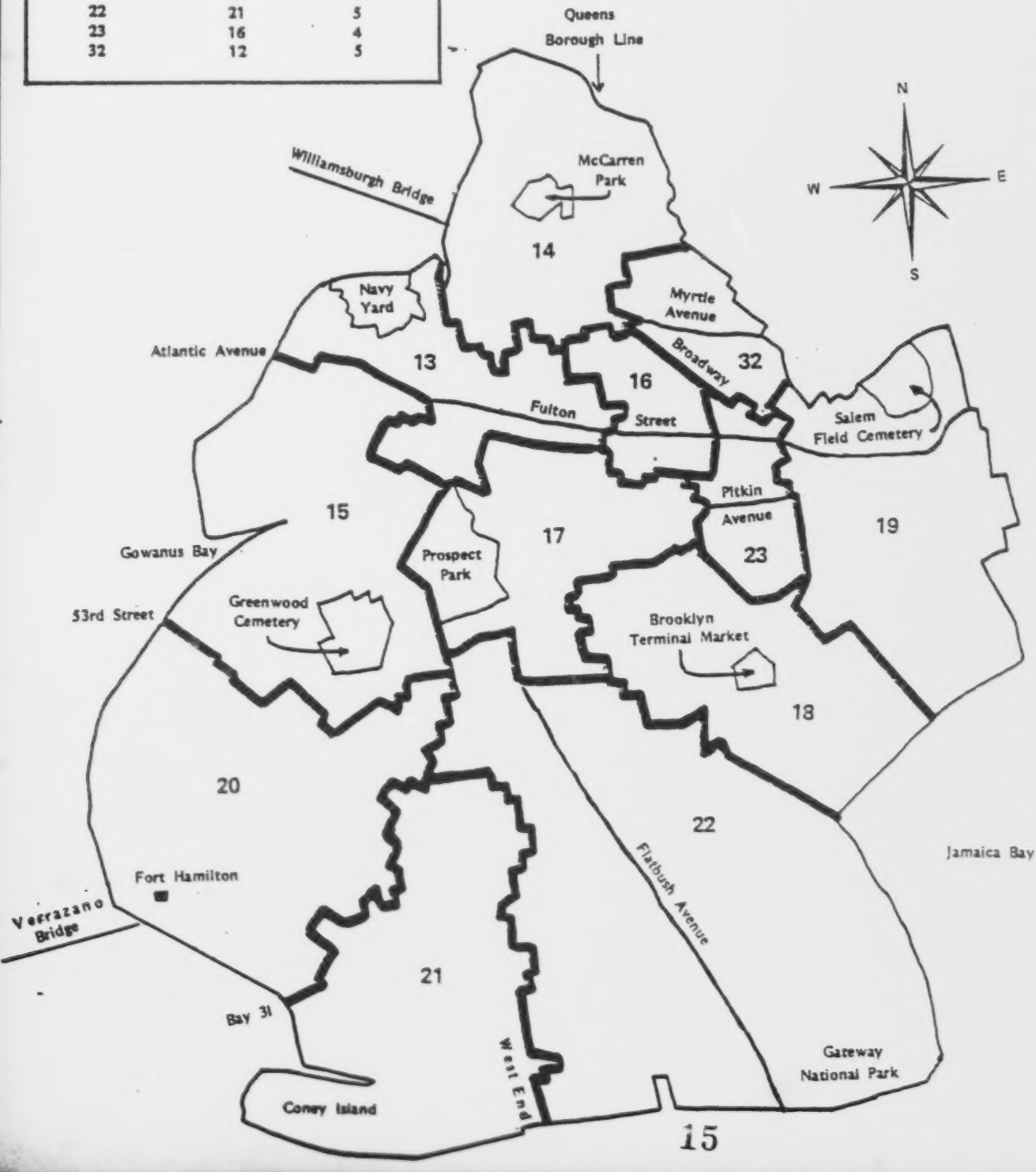
Bronx

District	Number of Schools: Elementary	JHS/IS
7	17	7
8	20	9
9	25	8
10	21	7
11	23	7
12	18	7

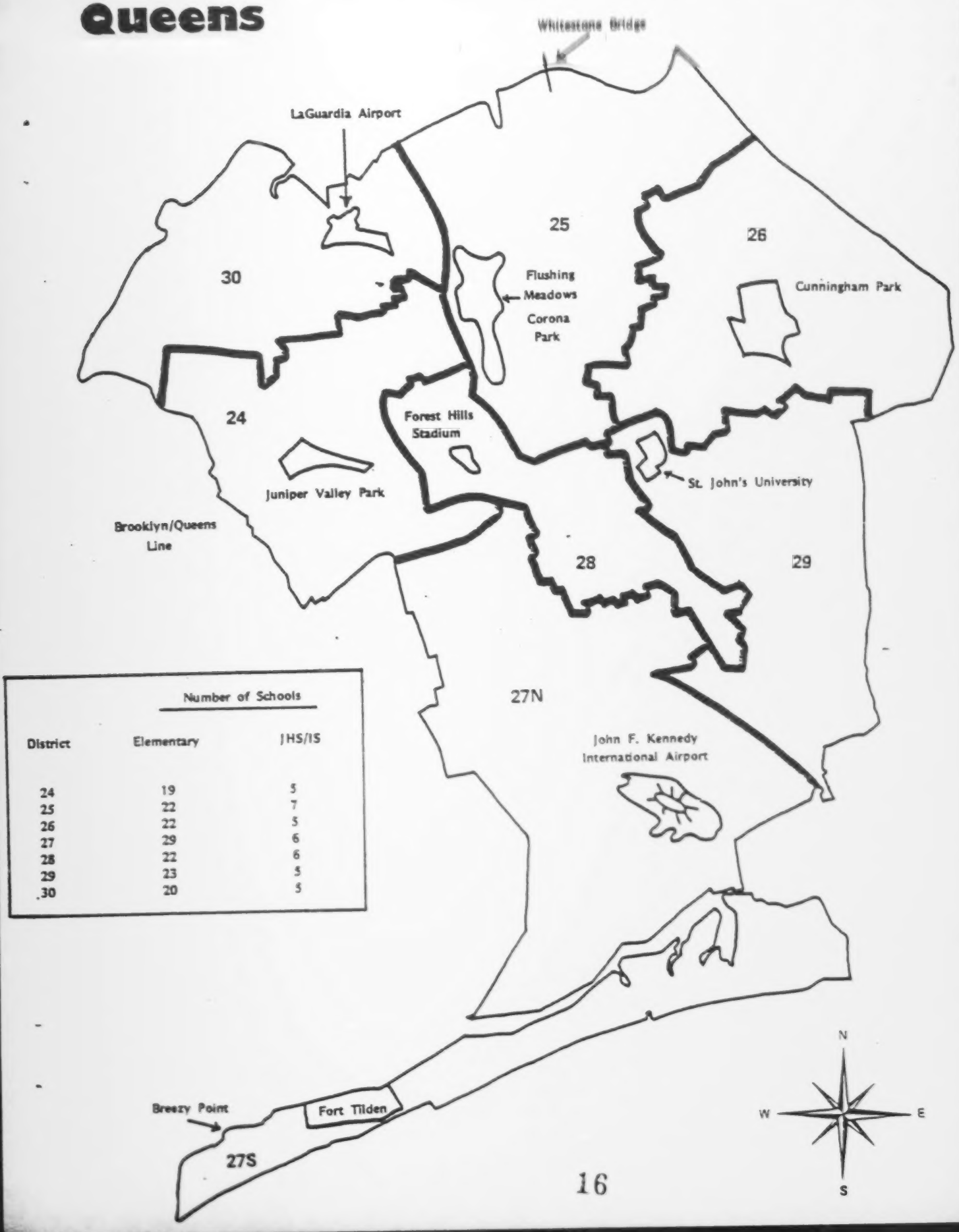


Brooklyn

District	Number of Schools: Elementary	JHS/IS
13	18	4
14	20	6
15	20	5
16	14	3
17	15	5
18	13	5
19	22	6
20	22	6
21	23	6
22	21	5
23	16	4
32	12	5



Queens



District	Number of Schools: Elementary	JHS/IS
24	19	5
25	22	7
26	22	5
27	29	6
28	22	6
29	23	5
30	20	5

Staten Island

Number of Schools		
District	Elementary	JHS/IS
31	39	9